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Letter dated 1 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia dated 31 July 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Russian]

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

On 26 July 2003, the steamer *Vega-1* made a sea voyage Sukhumi-Sochi-Sukhumi. According to available information there are plans to set up regular communications by sea between Sochi and Sukhumi, involving a proposed three voyages per week.

The steamer *Vega-1* committed a gross violation of the legislation of Georgia, including the Penal Code (illegal crossing of the State frontier and violation of customs rules), and also Decree No. 140 of 31 January 1996 of the President of Georgia, which is in force, on the closure of the Sukhumi seaport, the port facilities, the marine waters and a sector of the State frontier with Abkhazia, Georgia, to all forms of international transport, which was duly notified to the Russian side.

The Russian side, having information in its possession concerning the departure of the steamer *Vega-1* from the port of Sukhumi, did not inform the Georgian side of the presence of the offending vessel in a port of the Russian Federation and thereby, provided de facto assistance to enable the vessel to avoid the punishment prescribed by Georgian legislation and international law.

Such actions by the Russian side are incompatible with the principles of good-neighbourliness between the two States, the requirements of international law, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, and also the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Agreement between the Governments of Georgia and the Russian Federation.

Such actions by the Russian side are a gross violation of the provisions of the Memorandum on the maintenance of international peace and stability in the Commonwealth of Independent States of 10 February 1995 and the decision of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States of 19 January 1996 on measures to reach a resolution of the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and constitute de facto approval of the opening of communications by sea with the so-called "Republic of Abkhazia". This, together with other illegal and unilateral actions, in particular the introduction of a simplified procedure for crossing the border in the Abkhaz sector of the Georgian-Russian frontier, the offer of Russian citizenship to inhabitants of Abkhazia, Georgia, the resumption of communications by rail, and so forth, is a continuation of the policy of comprehensively supporting the separatist regime in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia states once again that the seaport of Sukhumi, the port facilities, the marine waters and the sector of the State border with Abkhazia, Georgia, are closed to all forms of international transport, other than humanitarian assistance, in accordance with the established rules. Given the repetition of similar illegal actions, the Georgian side demands that it be immediately informed and that the offending ships be detained pending an appropriate reaction by the Georgian side.

Tbilisi, 31 July 2003